



Humanizing Healthcare Through Harm Reduction

Addiction Medicine Day 2023

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Funding & Disclosures

Disclosures:

None

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- TREETOP Branch Pilot
- Magee CARES Award

Acknowledgements:

Our patients & other individuals who have shared and taught us through their experiences

Harm reduction activists who have paved the way for our work today

Prevention Point Pittsburgh



Learning Objectives

By completion of this session, participants should be able to:

1

Define and summarize the principles of harm reduction

2

Discuss the importance and impact of harm reduction practices at patient and population-level outcomes

3


Describe safer use best practices for different routes of administration

4

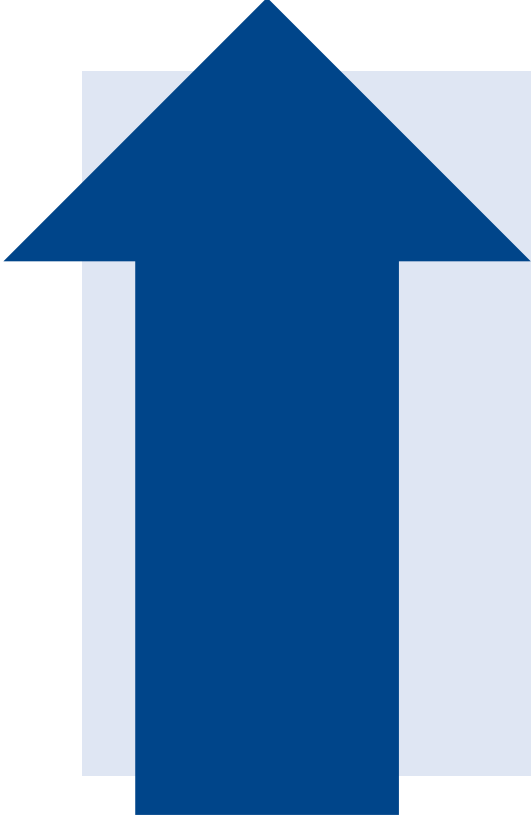
Explain practical implementation strategies in integrating harm reduction in the clinical setting



Content Outline

Framing the Issue 
Defining Harm Reduction
The Movement
The Evidence
Safer Use Best Practices
Shifting the Paradigm
Next Steps

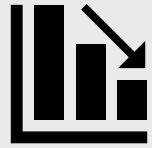
The Public Health Crisis

- 
- Healthcare utilization & costs
 - Hepatitis C cases (majority due to IV drug use)
 - HIV outbreaks
 - Infective endocarditis
 - Skin and soft tissue infections
 - Overdose deaths



The Overdose Crisis

#9



4% decrease compared to 2021



5,143 drug overdose deaths in 2022

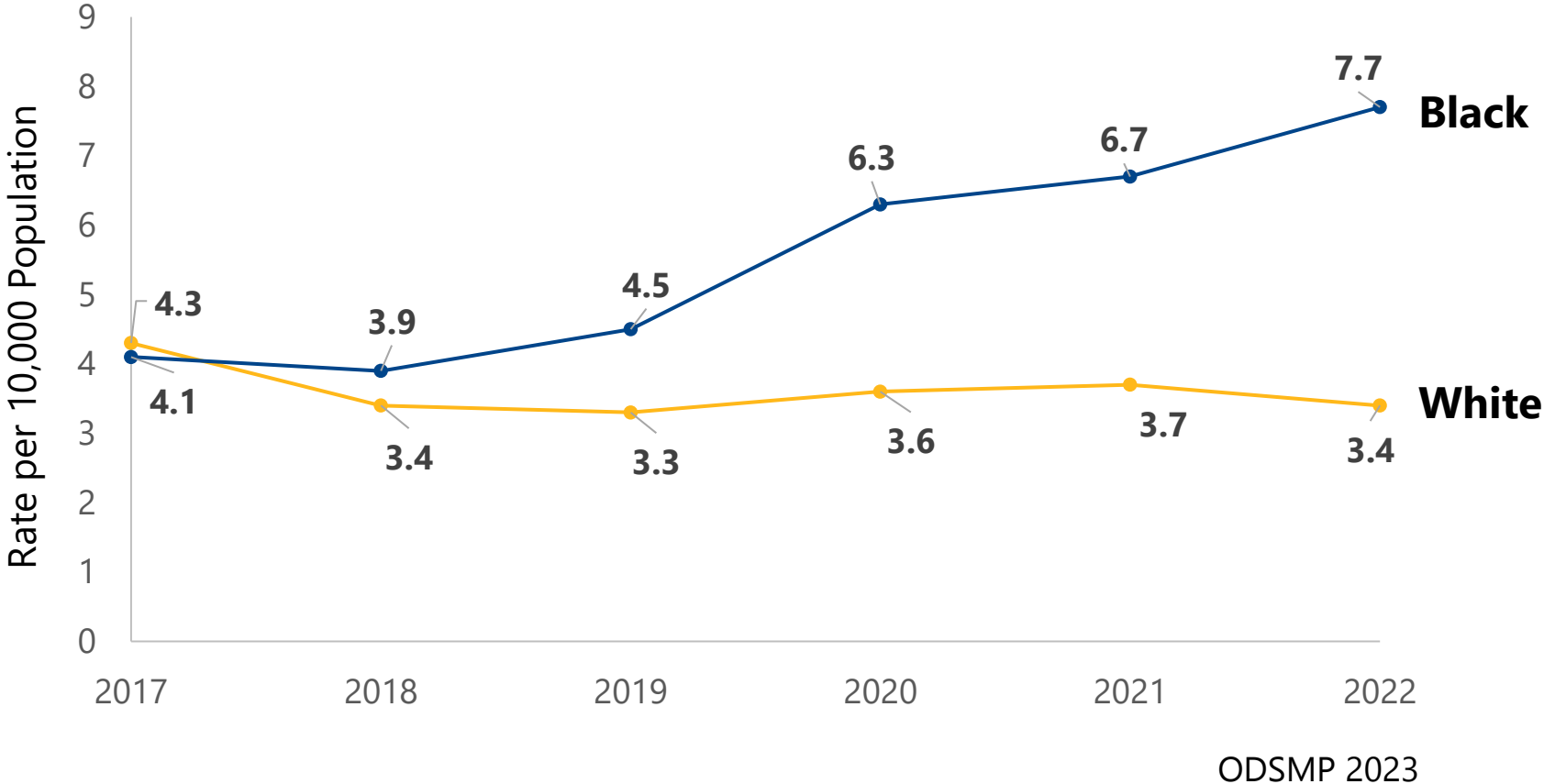


One Pennsylvanian died every **2 hours**


ODSMP 2023



The Overdose Crisis



Content Outline

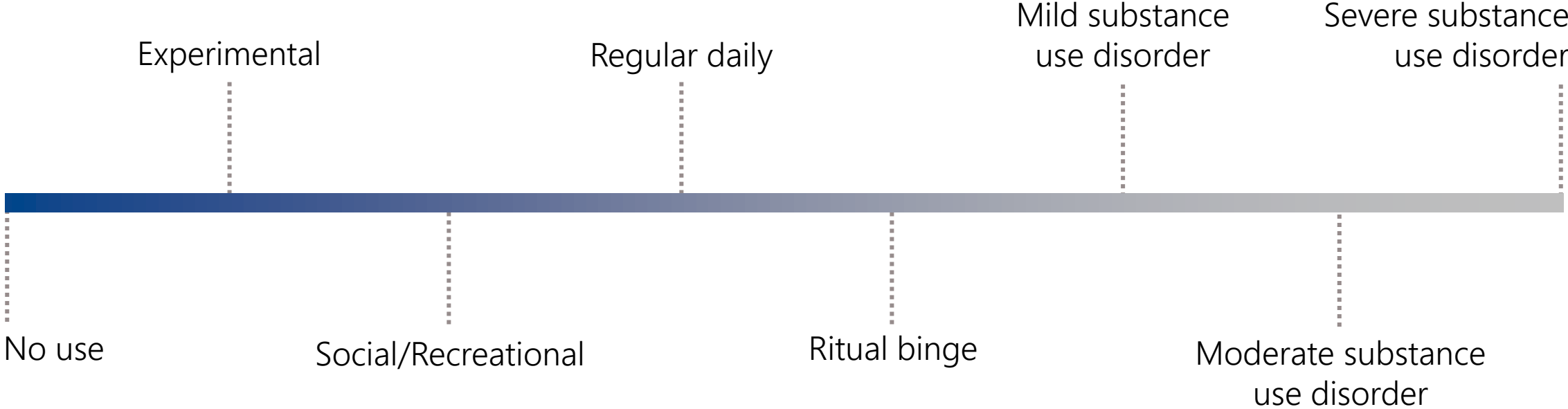
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**Any
positive
change**

What is Harm Reduction?



The Substance Use & Harm Reduction Continuum



Harm Reduction Principles

01

Treats people with dignity, compassion & respect

02

Acknowledges that change is an incremental process

03

Recognizes the reality and impact of social inequities

04

Meets people where they are at

05

Focuses on quality life improvement over abstinence

06

Empowers the individual

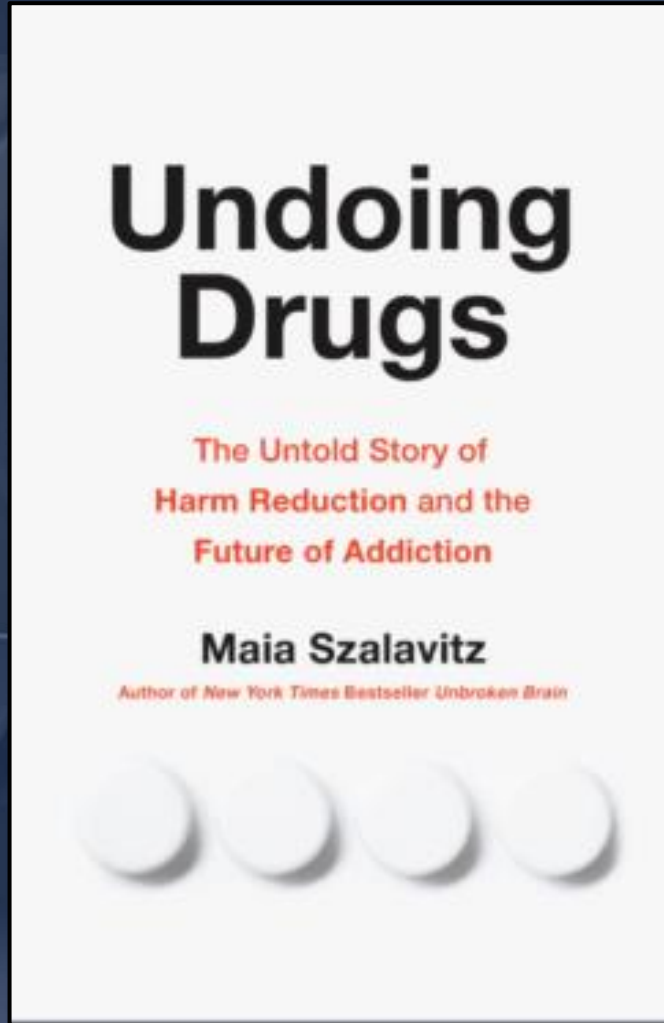
07

Combats stigmatization

08

Doesn't minimize or ignore harm of substance use

Content Outline



Framing the Issue
Defining Harm Reduction

The Movement

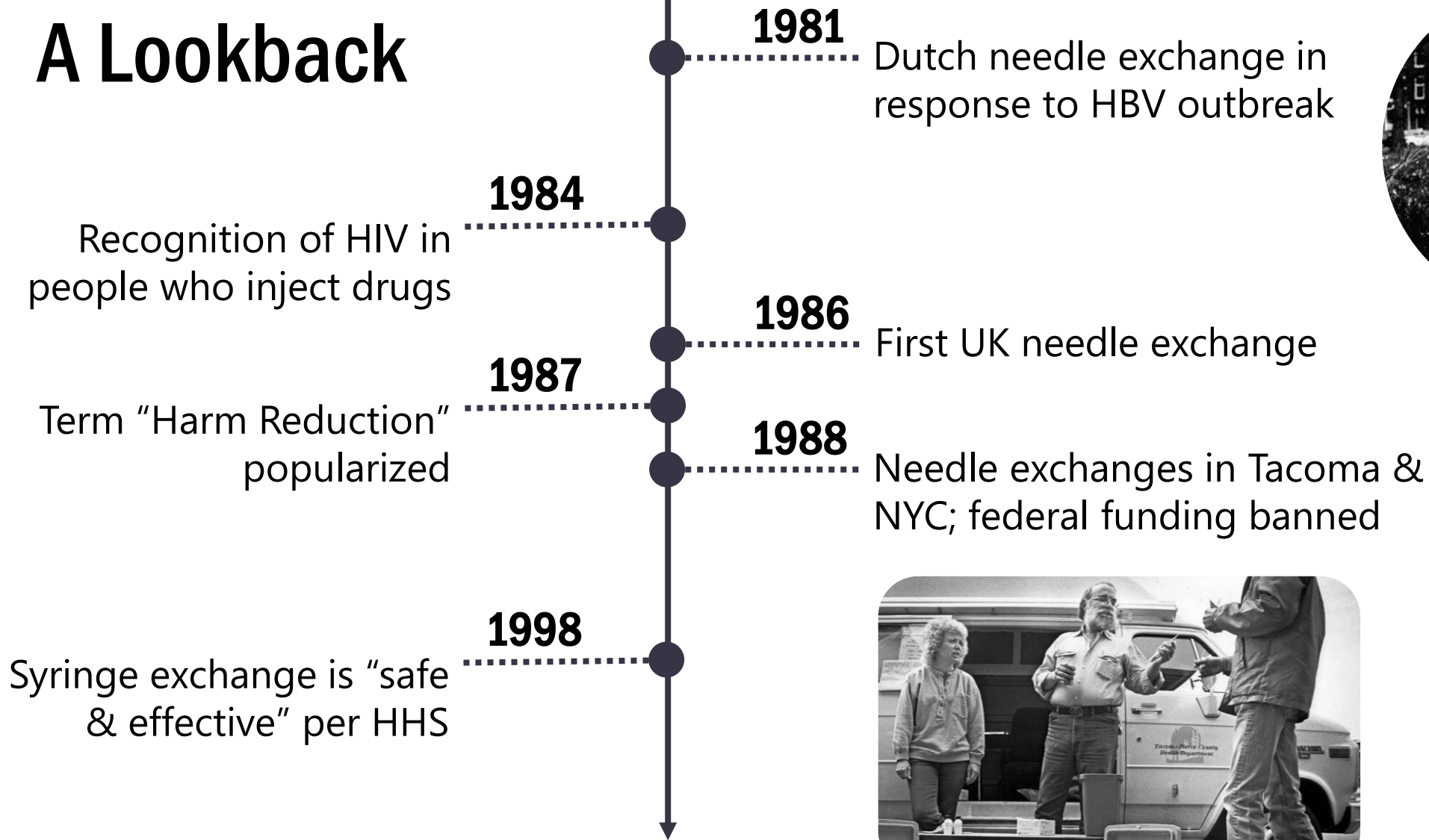
The Evidence

Safer Use Best Practices

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Next Steps

A Lookback



Syringe exchange is "safe & effective" per HHS



1998
Syringe exchange is "safe
& effective" per HHS



The New York Times

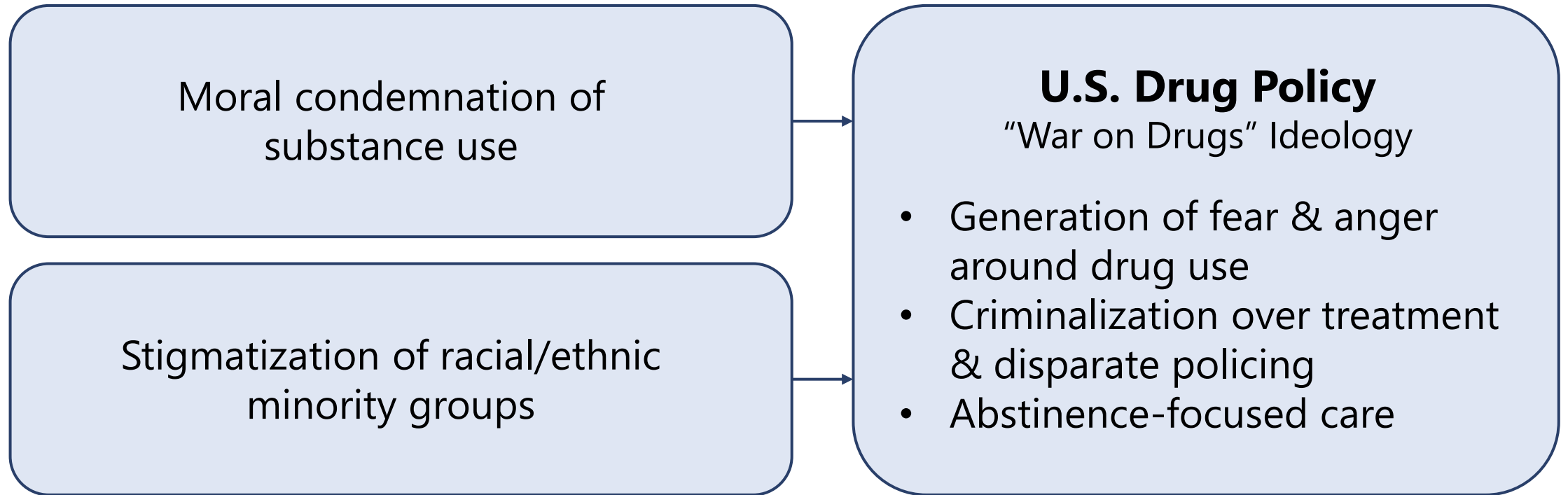
*Uproar Over 'Crack Pipes' Puts Biden
Drug Strategy at Risk*

2021

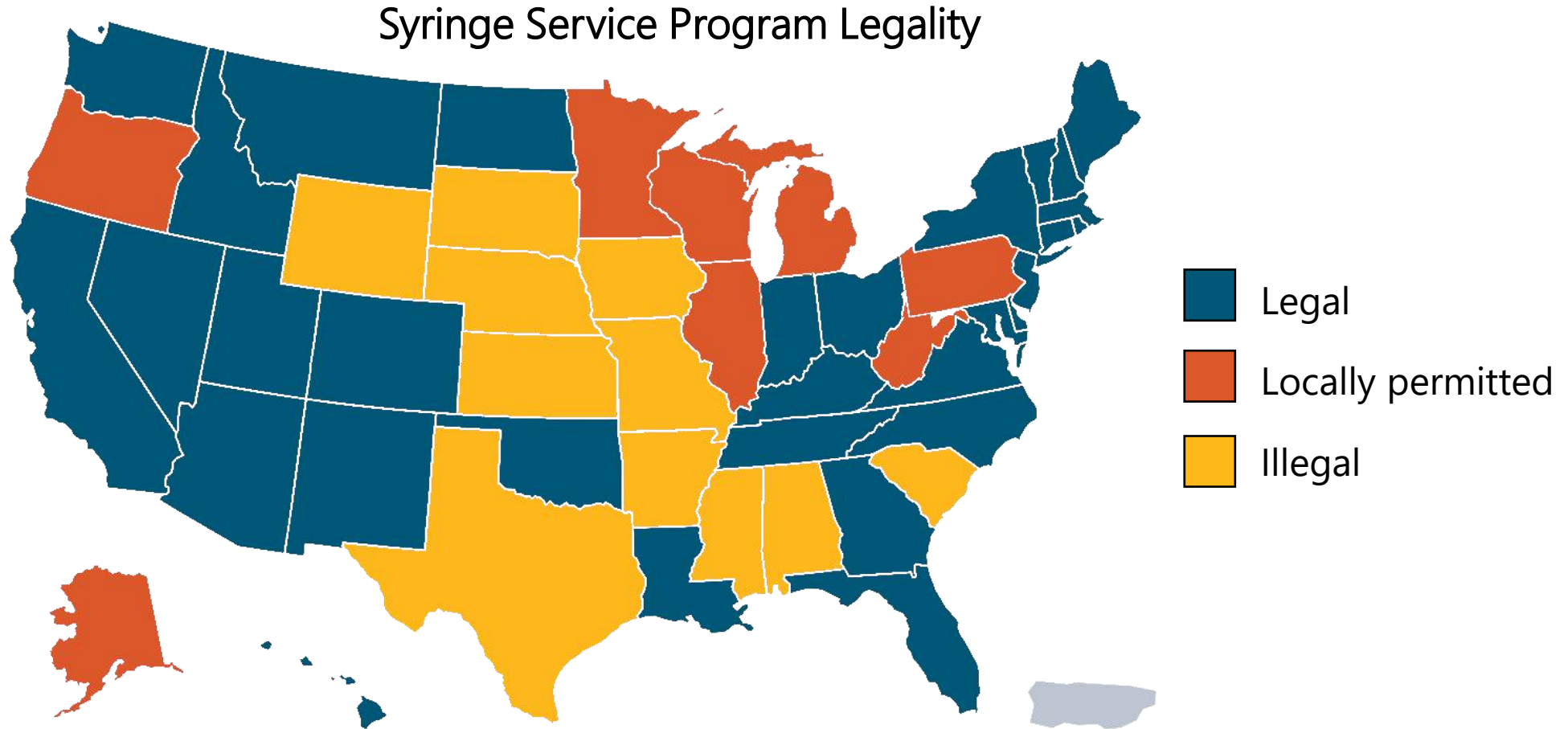
American Rescue Act allocates
\$30 million for harm reduction



Resistance in the US



Where are we today?



In Pennsylvania

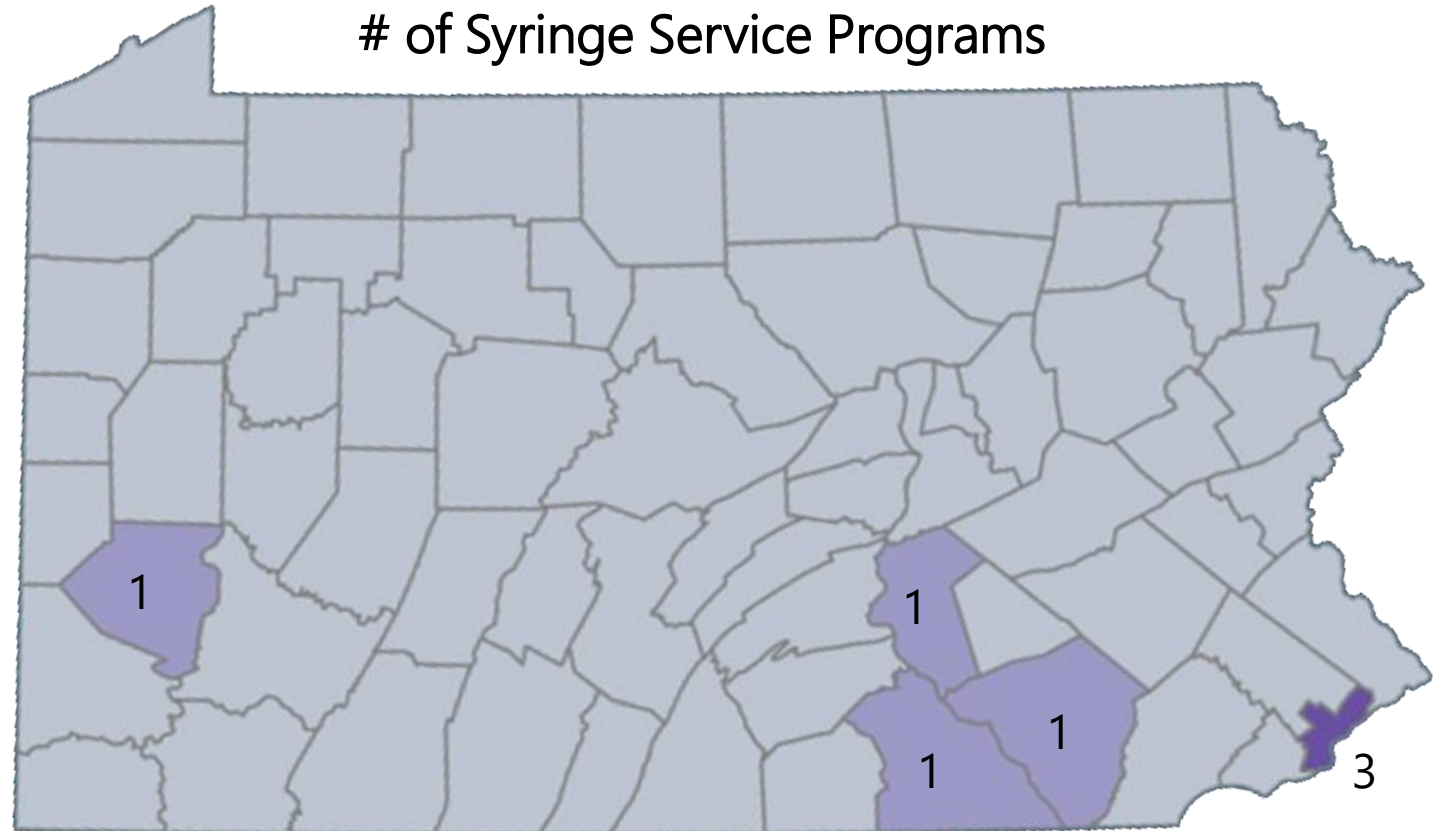
Prevention Point Pittsburgh

- Established 1995 by James Crow and Caroline Acker
- Went underground 1998
- County-authorized in April 2002
- Served >5000 individuals
- Now 5 operation sites

Allegheny County

- Article II passed 2007
- Recent revisions awaiting County Executive approval

of Syringe Service Programs



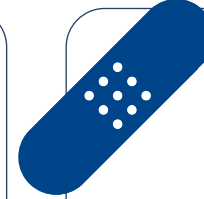
Beyond Needles: The Syringe Service Program



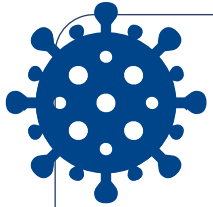
Overdose education & prevention



Education about drug supply & drug checking



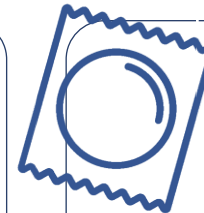
Wound care



Testing for HIV & hepatitis



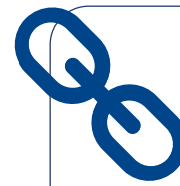
Vaccinations



Safe sex supplies & education




Housing services



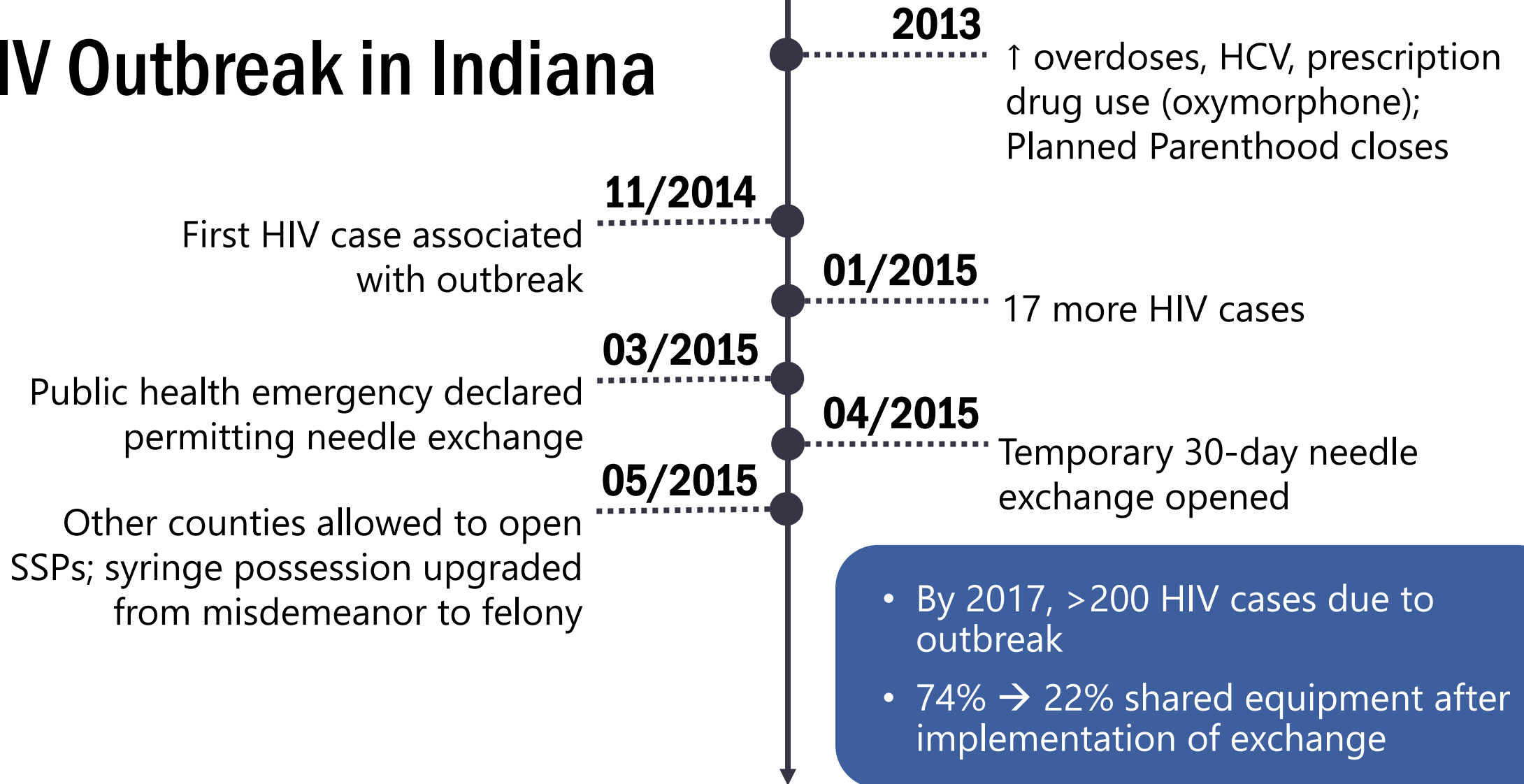
Linkage to treatment



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HIV Outbreak in Indiana



Save Lives, Save Money

> \$20 billion in federal funds
for HIV care & treatment

< 56 HIV cases if SSP implemented
Jan 2013

< 10 if SSP implemented Apr 2011

SSP operation:
\$0.4 to 1.9 million/year

Lifetime cost saved by preventing
1 HIV infection:
\$229,800/person



Harm reduction doesn't enable drug use.

Involvement in SSP...

5x

Facilitates entry into

- Methadone and other SUD treatment
- Medical managed withdrawal
- On-site buprenorphine treatment

3x

Associated with injection frequency decrease or discontinuation





Reduces disease



Cost effective



Treatment referral



Prevents overdose




Promotes community safety

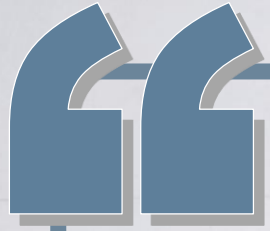


Doesn't increase crime

The Evidence

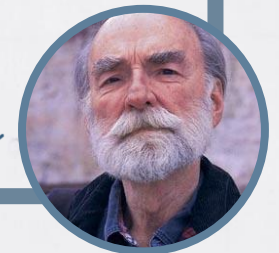
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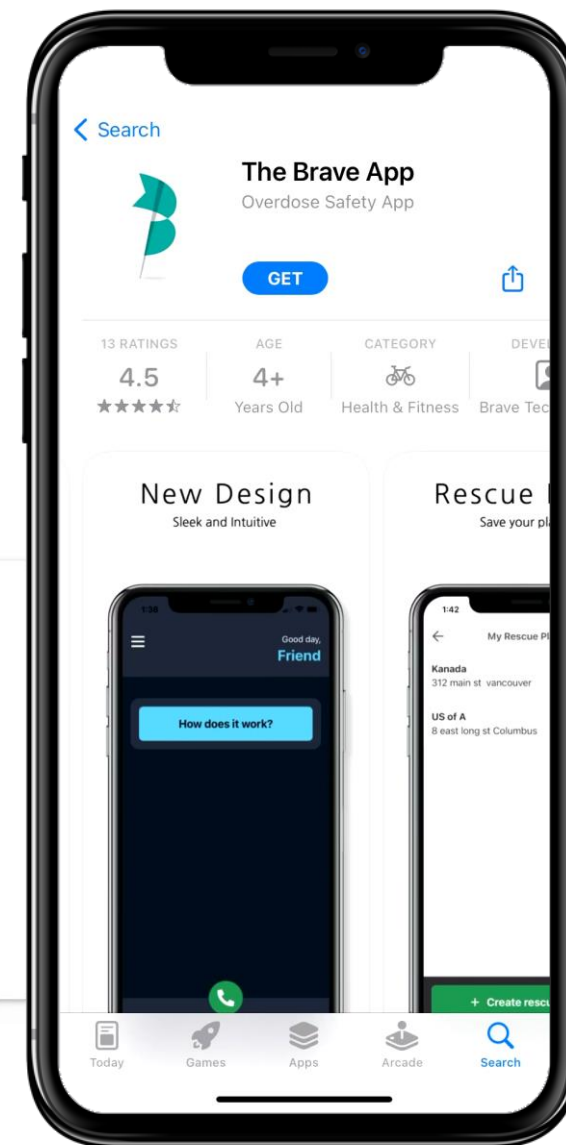
A dead person can't two-step, let alone twelve-step.

Dave Purchase



Overdose Prevention

- “Never use alone”
 - Have someone check in
 - Hotline (1-800-484-3731)
 - The Brave App
- Test shots – “start low and go slow”
- Avoid mixing substances
- Have naloxone nearby
- Drug checking



Naloxone (Narcan[®])

- Make sure people nearby & caregivers can use it
- Goal is to restore breathing, not alertness
- Now over-the-counter (\$45)
- Also accessible via:
 - NEXT Distro
 - Syringe service program



Naloxone (Narcan®)

Peel



Place



Press



Which one's real?



Real



Fake

Drug Checking

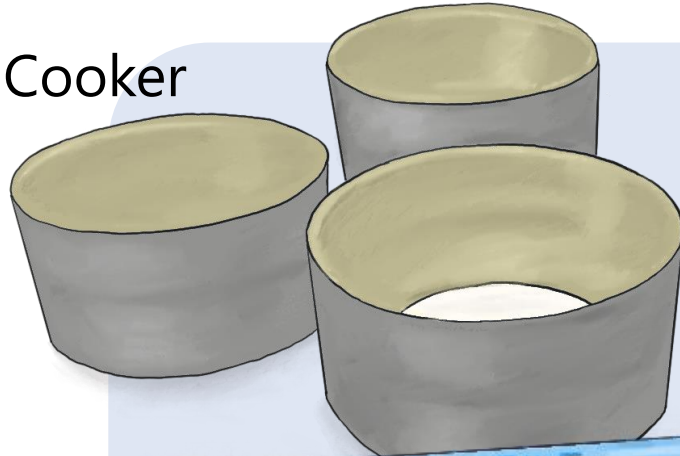
Xylazine test strip (XTS)



Fentanyl test strip (FTS)



Cooker



Sterile water

Illustrations by Shang

- FTS: stimulants (cocaine, meth), pressed pills
- XTS: fentanyl/opioids
- Decriminalized in PA (HB 1393)



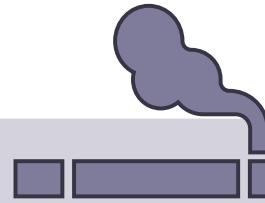
Routes of Administration



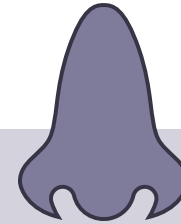
Injection



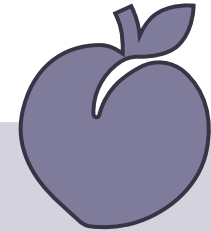
Swallowing



Inhalation
(smoking)



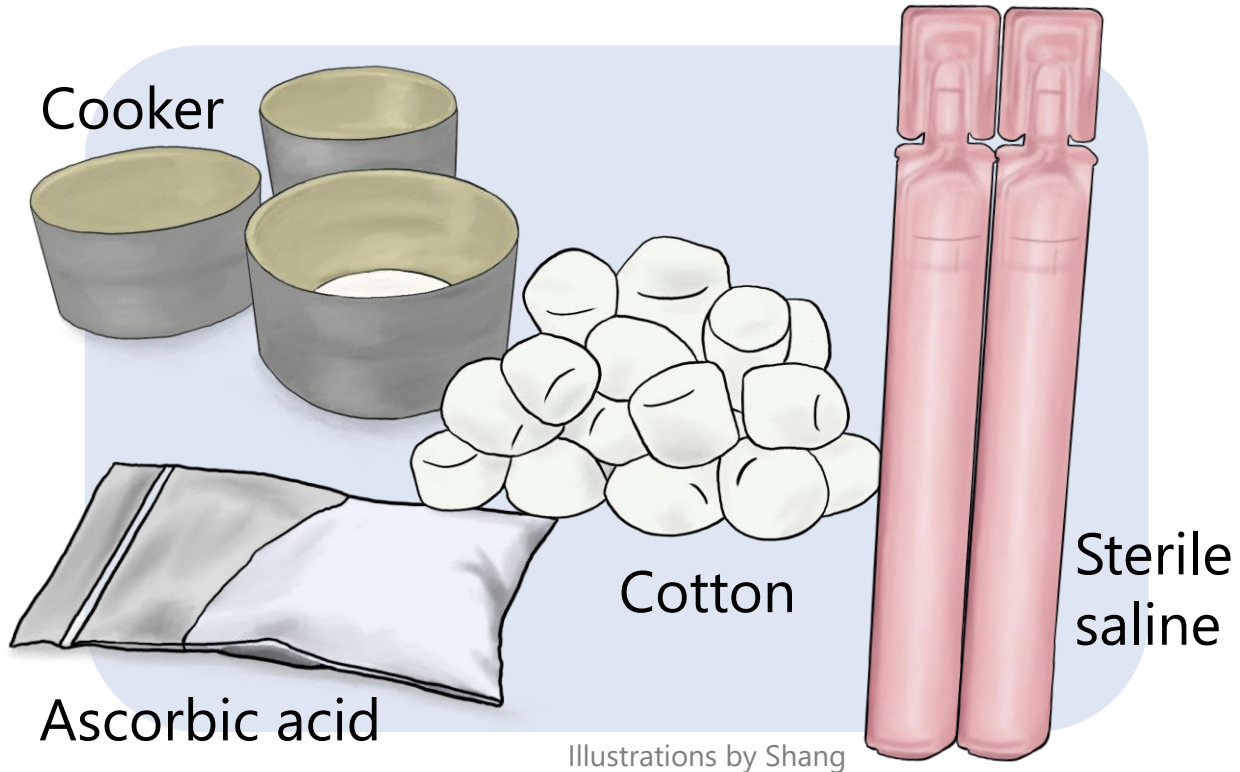
Insufflation
(snorting)



Rectal
(boofing)



Safer Injection: Prep



Supply	Use
Cooker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare drug • Single use
Sterile saline or water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissolve drug • Avoid use of boiled, bottled, tap water
Ascorbic acid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps dissolve certain drugs (crack cocaine) • Prevents use of vinegar or lemon juice, which damages veins & ↑ risk of fungal infections
Cottons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filters undissolved solid particles • Single use; avoid q-tips

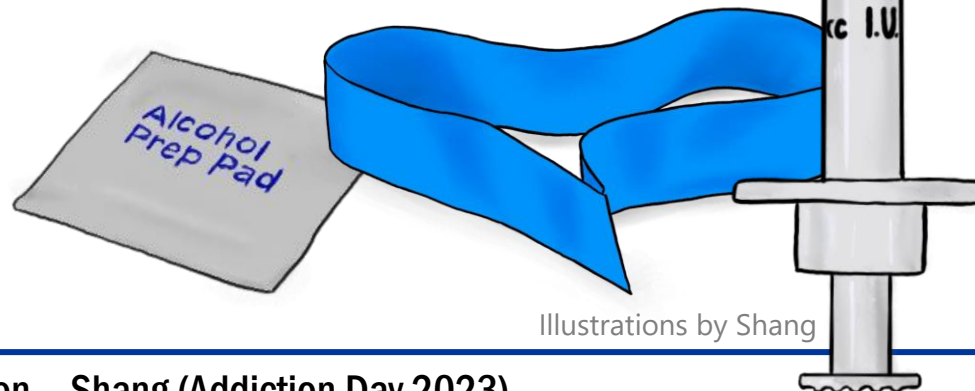
Safer Injection: Injecting

Common Syringe Sizes

Names*	Gauge	Needle Length	Syringe Size
Blues	25	5/8"	0.5 – 1 cc
Pogos	27	5/8"	
Halves	28	1/2"	
Ultrafines	29	1/2"	
Beestings	31	5/16"	

*Names used at PPP

- Avoid reusing or sharing
- Usually the smaller the needle, the better
- Obtain needles:
 - SSP
 - Purchase online
 - Buy at pharmacy
 - Provider prescription

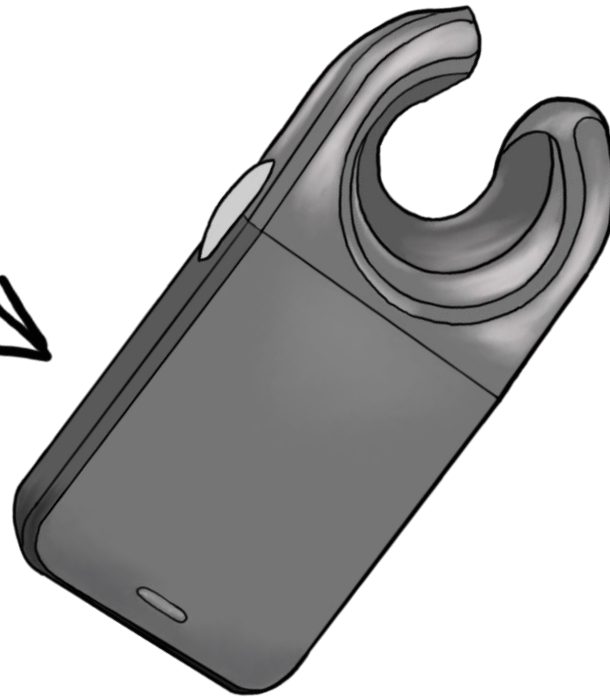


Illustrations by Shang



Safer Injection: Injecting

- Rotate sites
- Avoid using certain areas
- Use veins only
- Use a tourniquet
- Vein finders



-  Dangerous
-  Avoid if possible
-  Safest



Safer Injection: Disposal

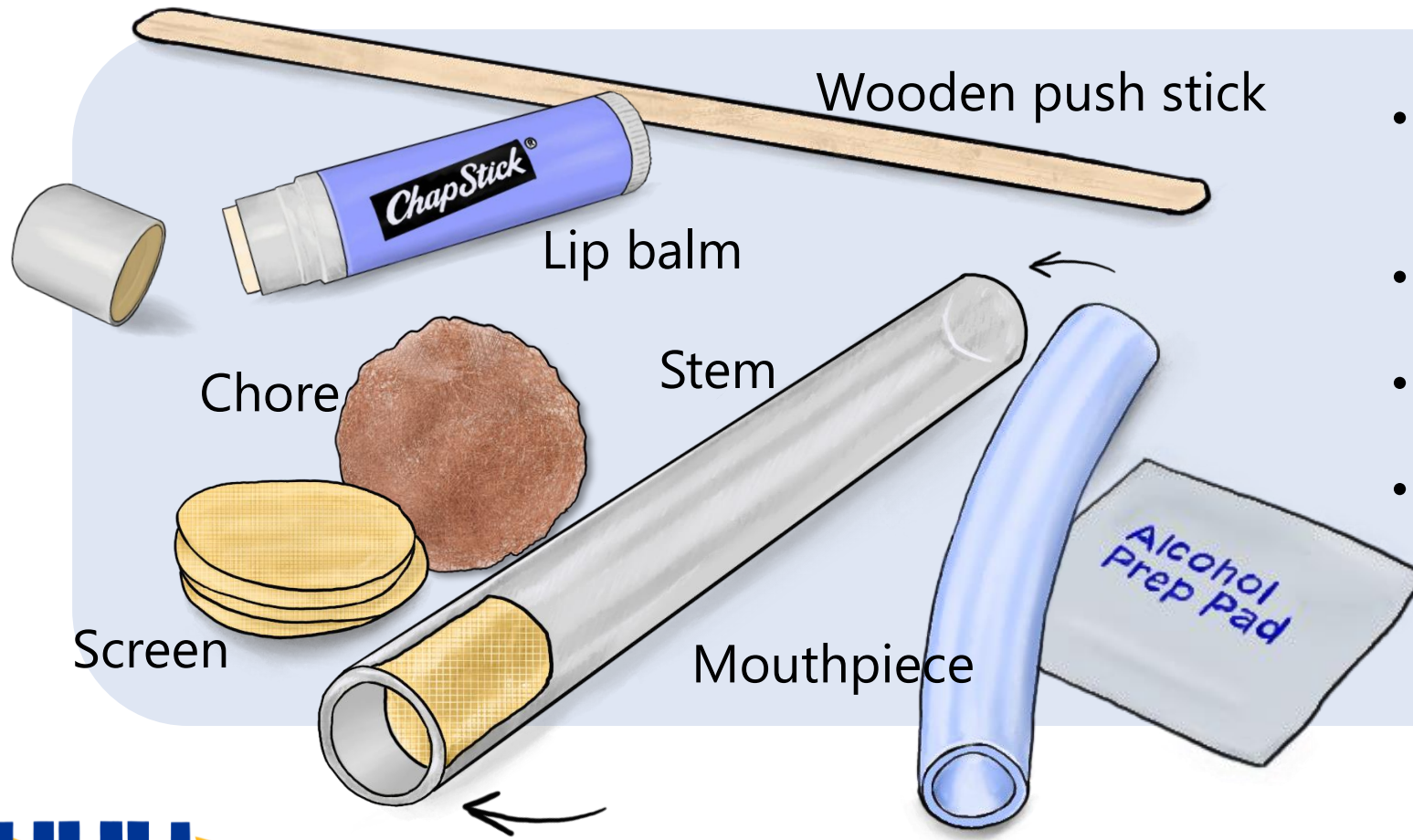
- Sharps disposal or strong plastic container
- Community drop off center or syringe service program



Illustrations by Shang



Safer Smoking: Crack Cocaine

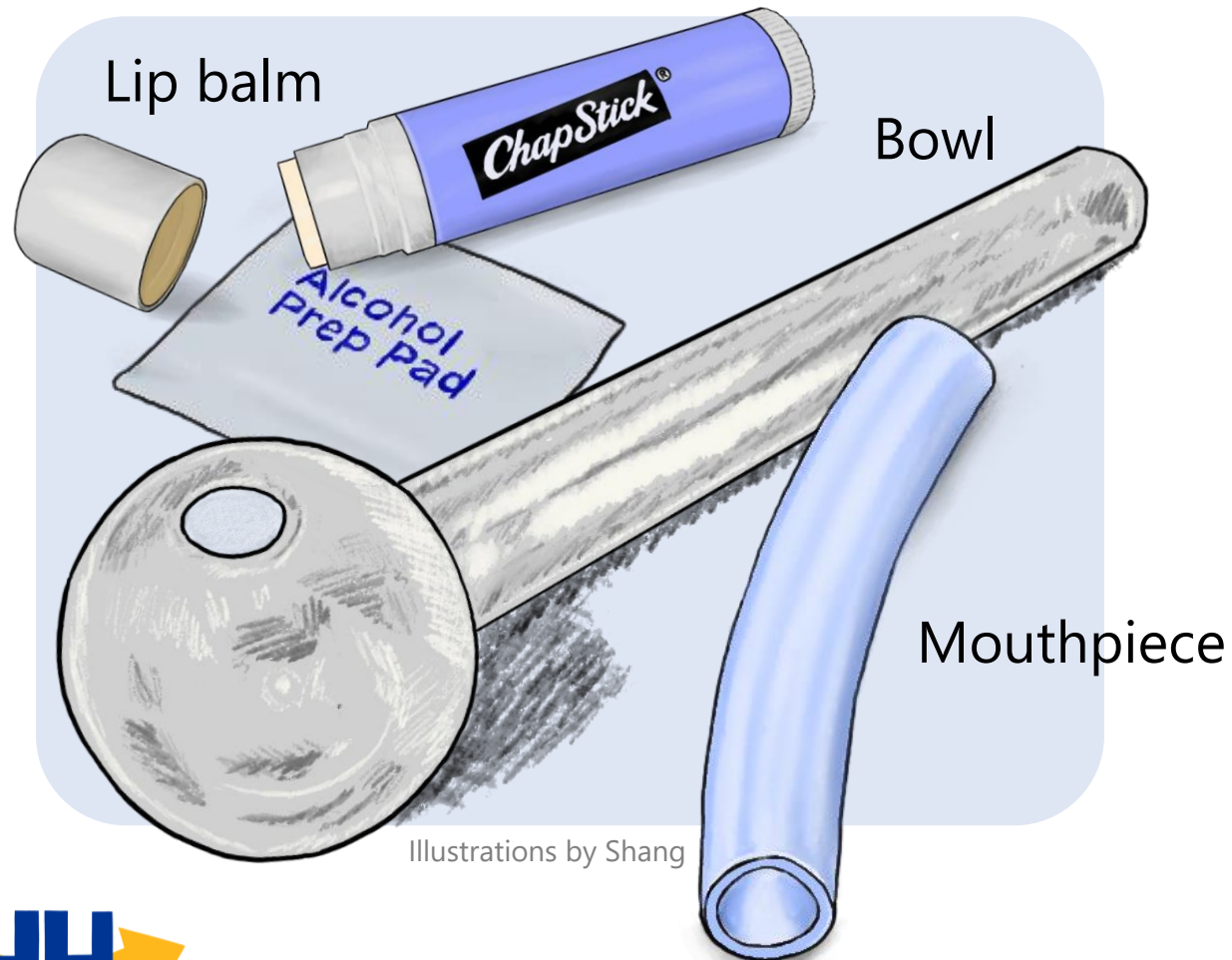


- Sharing pipes increases HCV transmission risk
- Avoid Brillo (steel wool)
- Practice mouthcare
- Pay rent/bills & buy food first

Illustrations by Shang



Safer Smoking: Meth



A Case for Safer Smoking Supplies: “Route-transitioning”

Survey of SSP clients before and after heroin pipe distribution

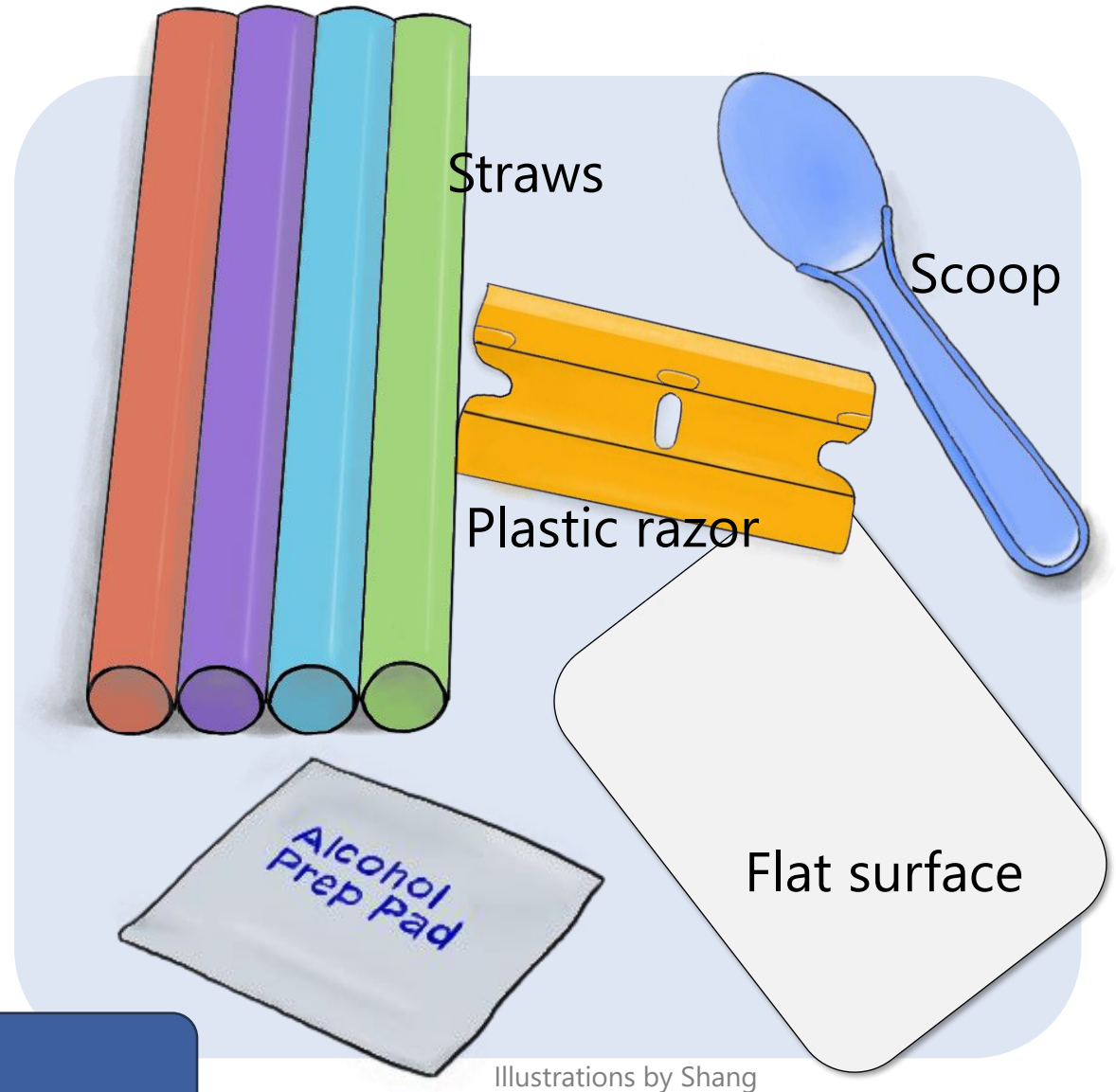
- 43% (86/201) → 32% (80/251), $p=0.02$ exclusively injected heroin
- 34% (37/110) of those using distributed heroin pipe reduced injection frequency

Survey of PWID

- Access to free safer smoking supplies reduced injection frequency by 12-44%
- 28-49% interested in access to supplies with majority reporting that access would reduce injection frequency

Safer Snorting

Supply	Use
Straws	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mark/use own to avoid HCV transmission• Avoid using dollar bill
Scoop	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use instead of key
Plastic razor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Crush drugs into finer powder which decreases damage to nasal mucosa
Flat surface	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Crush & use drugs from• Use instead of credit card

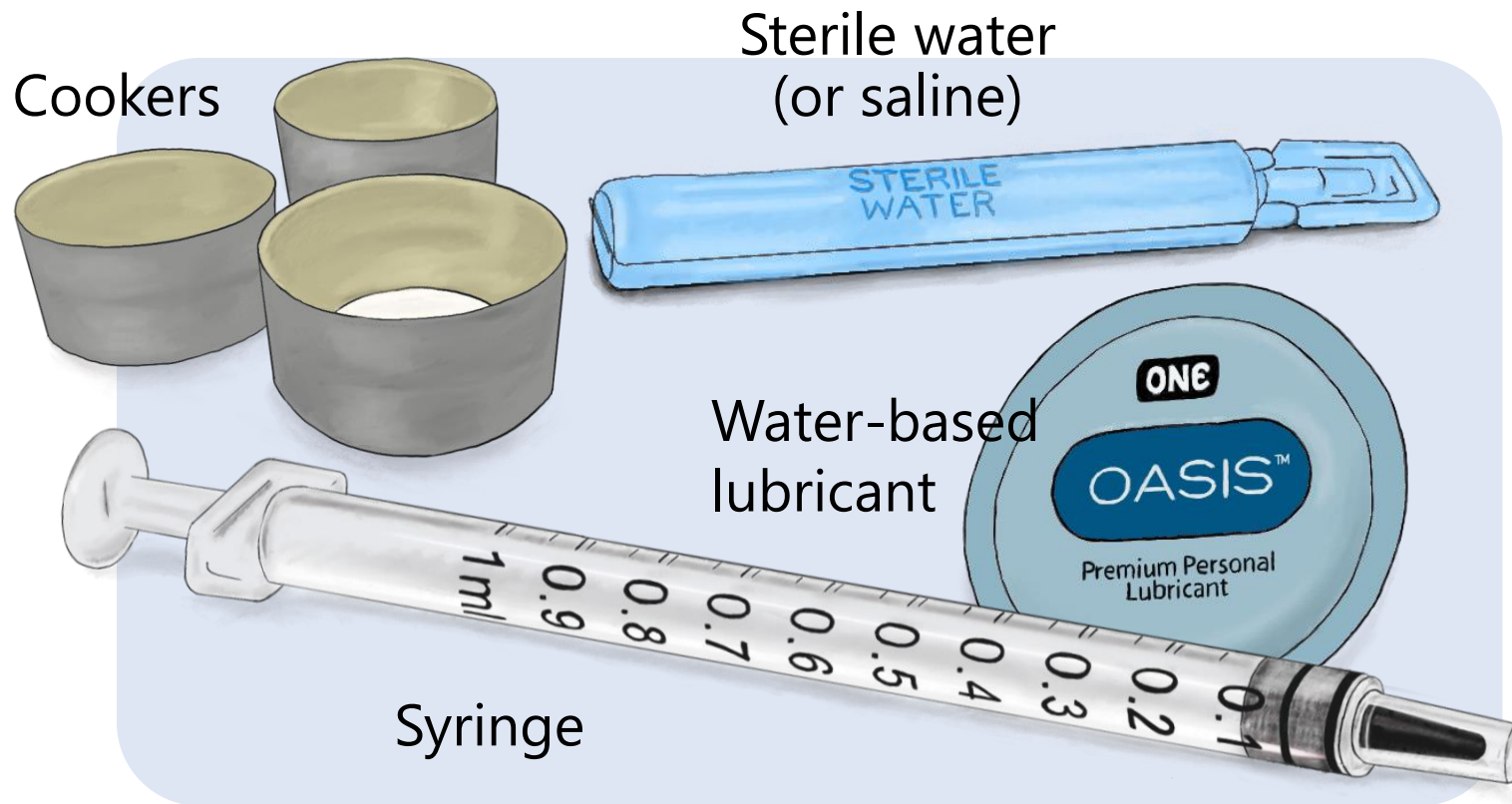


Illustrations by Shang

Alternate nostrils
Aftercare with saline spray or rinse nose



Safer Boofing



Illustrations by Shang

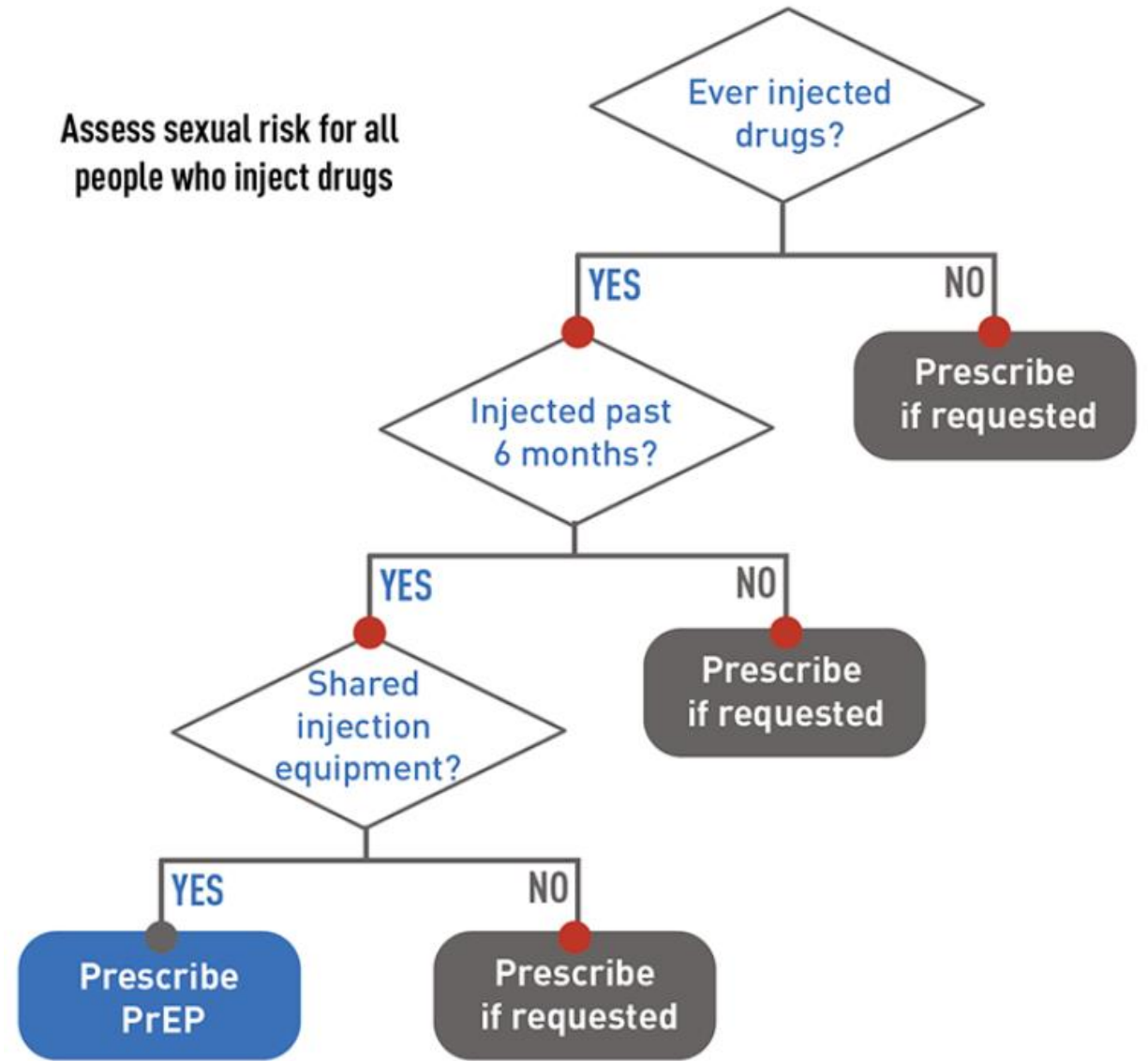
AKA “booty bumping”

- Faster/stronger high than smoking or swallowing
- Gives other body parts a break
- Consider boofing if can't get a vein




Other Considerations

- HIV and hepatitis testing
- Hepatitis C and HIV treatment
- Immunizations (hepatitis, tetanus, etc)
- PEP or PrEP
 - PrEP indications: HIV-positive injecting partner OR sharing injection equipment



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Shifting the Paradigm

UPMC Internal
Medicine Recovery
Engagement
Program

233



PUSH





Goals & Objectives

Change clinic culture to embrace patient-centered approach grounded in harm reduction principles

Staff & Providers

- Increase comfort with safer use best practices
- Systematically offer harm reduction services
- Reduce healthcare-related stigma

Patients

- Increase engagement in care
- Increase access to harm reduction services
- Improve long-term clinical outcomes




Harm Reduction Kits at IM-REP

- Pilot started February 2023
- Distributed the following safer use kits:
 - Fentanyl test strips
 - Safer boofing kits
 - Safer injection kits (no syringes)
 - Safer smoking kits (no pipes)
 - Safer snorting kits
 - Wound care kits
- Kits paired with patient-facing educational material



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What can you do?

- Get free FTS/XTS and naloxone
 - Allegheny County Health Department
 - PA Overdose Prevention Program (POPP) through PCCD/DDAP
- Prescribe naloxone
 - Make sure people know how to use it
- Carry naloxone
- Prescribe needles and PrEP/PEP
- Test for HIV/hepatitis, immunize, and refer to treatment
- Refer to Prevention Point Pittsburgh
- Advocate for drug policy change

- Talk to your patients about it
- Avoid making assumptions
- Shift from competence to humility



Harm Reduction at Multiple Levels

LOCAL LEVEL

- IM-REP & other COEs championing efforts
- Article II revisions (pending County Executive approval)
 - Regulation providing oversight to SSPs in Allegheny County
- Expands SSP accessibility/capacity

STATE LEVEL

- Fentanyl test strips decriminalized (HB 1393)
- Senate Bill 926 and House Bill 2264
 - Would legalize SSPs across PA
 - Both referred to respective judiciary committees

FEDERAL LEVEL

- Biden-Harris' National Drug Control Strategy 2022
 - Drug policy priorities include enhancing evidence-based harm reduction efforts
 - Naloxone, drug testing strips, & SSPs



Interested in becoming a harm reduction champion?

Contact us:

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jawar@upmc.edu



NEXT Distro
STAY ALIVE, STAY SAFE.



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